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ABSTRACT

The implications for American education today in reforms initiated at the Federal level in finance, research, curriculum, accountability, and administration were discussed by the U. S. Commissioner of Education. The financial reforms focus on revenue sharing. In the research area, Commissioner Marland discusses the proposed National Institute of Education (NIE), and the changes being made in the Office of Education so as to provide resources for programs for the disadvantaged. The major components of the higher education bill are, as stated by Commissioner Marland, expanded student aid, institutional aid, the National Foundation for Higher Education, and the National Institute of Education. Career education as proposed by the Office of Education is seen as the means of supplying young people, especially those in inner cities and rural depressed areas, with knowledge about the world of work and with control over their own lives. Commissioner Marland states that the year that had elapsed since his taking office has been a good one, and he is optimistic about the future of education in this country. (DB)

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A YEAR AGO THIS WEEK*

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By S. P. Marland, Jr.
U.S. Commissioner of Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

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There seems to be a general stereotype in the land that casts the Administration in Washington at this time as somehow lacking in commitment to education. That stereotype has prevailed in degrees, I think, in the posture of the press toward this Administration and certainly prevails in a good number of our educational organizations. I hold that President Nixon has been and continues to be a devoted champion of education at this time and in the past, and that the record should be more clearly illuminated. In the hope that this can be illuminated, I propose to make my remarks about it today.

I think that it is important to say that I came to Washington a year ago without any political credentials, and I don't have them now nor have I been asked to speak on behalf of the President. As far as I know, no one except a few people around my office and I know that I chose to speak on this topic.

I am an avowed supporter of education -- I have been all my life -- and I think that I'm able to read some of the signs in this Administration or any other that speak to the quality of commitment within that administration toward the subject which I hold very high. I think the President and the government have a good story to tell, and I don't think it's been told very well.

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If I did not hold to that belief, I could not come before you, nor could I stand before the many audiences, especially of colleagues in education around the country with whom I have been meeting this past year very frequently, and speak of the enlarged determination of this Administration to bring success to the schools and colleges and restore the confidence of the people in these institutions which in my judgment has now eroded. Nor could I stand before you and speak to this unless I sincerely believed it. For I have no axe to grind for anybody. I speak as an educator and colleague.

I take this position with some confidence because, for one reason, while the Office of Education is operating this year in 1972 under the largest budget in its history -- $5.35 billion -- this figure would have been nearly a billion dollars more if Congress had enacted the President's entire budget request for $6.14 billion in fiscal year 1972, far and away the largest increase ever requested for education by any administration in history. This does not seem to creep into the messages surrounding the Administration's position.

A major share of this figure was the half-billion dollars sought for fiscal year 1972 for the Emergency School Assistance Program, a proposal clearly devoted to the great and deep social stresses of this country having to do with racial isolation and part of the higher education legislation that will probably go into conference of the House and Senate in January. It is important that this legislation be enacted swiftly in order that new Federal programs can begin to get to those cities and communities which are in such desperate need of these dollars.

The figures I have cited serve to illuminate one of the curious fictions of our time -- the allegation that the Administration has consistently failed to request a respectable amount of money for educational purposes. This undoubtedly goes back to some of the vetoes of budgets in 1970 and 1971 which were viewed as opposed to education. As I view these vetoes -- and I was not here at the time and speak only as an observer -- they were challenges to the Congress and challenges to the world of education to strengthen themselves, to get on with the job, and to do a better piece of work in education as distinct from more of the same and a repetition of the old programs that seemed not to be working. And the Administration did put its money where its mouth was by launching a number of reforms and activities through legislation.

Those years are behind us, though, and I'm speaking now for the present, the year that I have seen since coming here and being sworn in on December 18 of last year. I believe that the President did challenge Congress and did challenge us in education to do better and am convinced that he is now realizing the fruits of this challenge to some degree. The Congress is moving on his requests and education is looking seriously at itself toward reform and renewal.

During the last two fiscal years, the President's budget has requested increases for Office of Education programs totaling 77 percent over those two years -- 24 percent from 1970 to 1971, and 53 percent from 1971 to 1972. This is a remarkable index of concern for education, particularly when compared with the previous Administration -- about which I have no criticism -- which asked for increases totaling 2 percent for education programs in its last four budget submissions.

In terms of actual appropriations as distinct from budget requests, increases in the last two fiscal years have totaled 30 percent -- 18 percent from 1970 to 1971, and 12 percent from 1971 to 1972. And this compares with a net increase in actual appropriations of only 15 percent in the preceding four years.

The total amount requested by the Administration for Office of Education programs in the first three years of the Nixon Administration was $13.4 billion, an increase of 18 percent over the $11.3 billion requested in the preceding three years. OE appropriations during these years came to $13.3 billion, or a 16 percent increase over the $11.5 billion appropriated in the previous three years.

Let me point out too that during the first two years of the current Administration, while Federal expenditures in general enlarged at the annual rate of 3.5 percent, the priority of the Office of Education was quite evident in that OE expenditures increased 8.5 percent overall. Education, to sum up, has been receiving and is receiving an increasingly larger share of the Federal budget.

I view this as an impressive piece of evidence of commitment to education -- putting our money where our mouth is -- at a time of very serious economic stress in this country and competition for the Federal dollar. And yet I would not point to the dollar signs by any means as the strongest evidence of the importance the President and his staff, including myself, attach to supporting education. I do not believe the major education initiatives of the Administration can be accurately gauged by the number of dollars requested and spent.

The President made clear in his Education Reform Message his belief that we do not simply need more money, we need better ways in which to spend it; we do not need to proliferate Federal programs, guidelines, and regulations, we need policies that are more responsive to the requirements of the States and communities where the front-line work of education is going on. Reforms initiated at the Federal level -- in finance, research, curriculum, accountability, and administration -- have implications for American education today that go far beyond the size of our budget implications, even this year. They are the groundwork for an educational system that will embrace not only schools and colleges and universities, but also will have the potential of reaching every individual in the country and at every stage of his or her existence. Launching these reforms has been the story of 1971. Realizing their effectiveness will, I hope, be the story of American education for many years to come.

FINANCIAL REFORMS

To begin with, the President is determined to bring to reality a concept that has been under active bipartisan consideration for at least ten or fifteen years. I am speaking of revenue sharing, a way of entrusting the States and the local school districts with a larger share of the Nation's responsibilities and a larger share of its resources. As Secretary Richardson said in his testimony on the Education Revenue Sharing Act in late October, "We have...reached a position in history where the Federal funds devoted to education are substantial, where the

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Nation accepts this as necessary, and where it is necessary and appropriate to broaden the authority given the States and localities."

There are so many things to be said in revenue sharing's favor, but I have a special enthusiasm for it -- my own personal vision for the Office of Education as a true national service organization, freed of paperwork and administrative detail, free to carry to the people in the field -- at their call -- the technical expertise and knowhow that should be our most valuable stock-in-trade as the center of the network of concerned educators. We should be solving problems in education, not pushing paper. Education revenue sharing can point strongly in that direction.

Revenue sharing implies fundamental change in the administration of Federal funds, not necessarily a substantial increase in the amount of money for education, though that would seem likely. It is not meant to be a money bill but rather a process bill. People keep saying, "Why don't you have more money in revenue sharing?" Revenue sharing is meant to deliver the money appropriated by Congress. It is not meant to appropriate money.

RESEARCH

Touching on research, consider the Administration's extraordinary initiatives in educational research, responding again to the President's call for reform, for change, and for renewal. This is an opaque area that has absorbed more than a billion Federal dollars in the past few years. Yet the results are quite insubstantial, even now. The President has proposed legislation, also a part of the higher education bill, to

establish a National Institute of Education, NIE. This institution would finally get it all together in educational research and development, achieving the critical mass of intelligence needed to make a difference in what happens in the classroom. Time does not permit me to describe the range of NIE's inquiries as they are presently envisioned. Yet I will say that NIE would be concerned with such things as how to restructure our educational system for greater effectiveness, how to increase access to education for all, how to bring productivity to education, how to reexamine the governance of education, how to look to the financing of education, and how to help minority and poor children learn, for they are not learning now.

We are making important changes at this time in the Office of Education - not in a reorganization but in regrouping ourselves more centrally. We want to be able to focus what resources we have in terms of delivering to the schools and colleges a more lively and immediate service without the cluttering of paperwork and the infinite array of forms, multiforms, evaluations, guidelines, and regulations. We call this renewal. It is a system of putting together in one piece most of the discretionary programs we have and delivering them in depth to sites to be chosen competitively and with the participation of the States. These programs will focus entirely on the disadvantaged to finally bring quality education to those most in need. Under the administration of local creative and risk-taking administrators, resources will be targeted in depth to solve these problems and become examples of models throughout the country. We hope to have 20-30 pilot projects operational by the end of fiscal year 1973.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Turning again to legislation - the higher education bill going to the conference committee next month in all likelihood -- I would point to the fact that its major components, including expanded student aid, institutional aid, the National Foundation for Higher Education, and the National Institute of Education, are all Administration initiatives. The President demanded, somewhat over a year ago, that no young person in the United States should be denied the benefits of higher education if he was qualified and wanted to go to college. No one has ever dared say that from a public podium of responsibility. He is pressing that this legislation be passed and I am helping him press it. There is division in Congress as to whether the legislation will indeed be aimed at the most needy -- either at the most needy students and families or at the most needy institutions in terms of the ways they are responding to Federal initiatives.

We can't be sure, of course, what the higher education legislation will look like when it comes out of committee. We are hopeful that it will be the most far-reaching piece of legislative support of its kind ever devised in this country. We are gearing ourselves up to put it in motion -- the Foundation planning, the NIE planning, and the infinite planning attaching to student aid and ultimately to institutional aid.

CAREER EDUCATION

Career education -- another current and exciting thrust of the Office of Education. Like so many things I have been talking about today, it is a future, still a concept and not nailed down as a blueprint

as yet, but the launching of a debate which I hope will sweep across the country in the next year or two. We are trying to find ways to make elementary and secondary schools and community colleges and four year institutions more meaningful to those young people who are now there. So many find themselves aimless, without purpose, without a sense of career, and indeed, without a sense of controlling their own lives. And we hold with many of the ablest psychologists that one of the great solutions to our education for disadvantaged will be when these young people, especially in our inner cities and rural depressed areas, begin to feel and genuinely know that they can have a control over their own lives.

This speaks to career education. Young people will know what the world of work is all about -- to pursue it in the early grades and learn about it more intensively as they come up through the grades. Their options are always open, whether they go on to higher education after high school or go into a career, always able to spin off from the institution whenever they wish and spin back onto it again. They will be responsible people who are concerned with their own destiny.

The Nixon Administration is deeply involved in career education as it is in all of these highlights that I have tried to give you from this quick sketch of 1971. I could go on with many others, mentioning such programs as drug abuse education, environmental education, experimental schools, Right to Read, increased aid to black colleges, adult education, and manpower training and development. I assure you that we are devoting money and thought in very large amounts in order to

evolve useful answers to the questions Americans are presently asking about their schools in a spirit of disenchantment and expecting accountability.

I've been leafing through a catalogue with you today, a catalogue which is not a true measure of the goods offered therein. But after a year in office, I am persuaded that the Federal education effort is being strongly and effectively supported by this Administration. I expect that it will be even more strongly and effectively supported in the years to come. And again I say, as I said at the beginning of these remarks, we have had a good year. I am optimistic about the future of education in this country or I would have no right standing before you today as the Commissioner of Education.

Thank you.

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